READING AND WRITING CENTER
Westfield State University

Preparation Materials for the
Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure:
Communication and Literacy Skills Test

WRITING SUBTEST

Sections on grammar:
Multiple-choice written passages &
Short answer sentence corrections
Grammar

This component of the Writing subtest will test the ability of candidates in the mastery of grammar and sentence mechanics through **multiple-choice** and **short answer** questions by asking candidates

- to identify grammatical mistakes
- to edit writing that is poorly organized

For the **multiple-choice written passages items**, candidates must analyze brief written passages, recognize grammatical, usage, or structural errors, and identify **proposed corrections**.

There are approximately 35 **multiple-choice questions** that are linked to brief written passages referring to numbered “parts” relating to sentences and their structure, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, sequence of ideas, subject-verb agreement, misplaced modifiers, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and word usage. Candidates must select the ONE **best answer** to correct errors of language that do not conform to standard English conventions.

For the **short answer sentence correction items**, candidates must read each sentence, recognize the errors, and **rewrite** the sentence to conform to standard English conventions.

There are approximately 7 **questions requiring sentence corrections**. Each text contains **two errors** on sentence construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. In addressing the errors, candidates may restructure the syntax (of the original text), but the essential elements (e.g., names, places, actions) and relationship among those elements (e.g., cause/effect, before/after) must be maintained. The rewrite should not introduce any **new errors** in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation. (Proper names of people and places are correctly spelled within the text.)

Test-Taking Strategies

Multiple-choice questions:

1. Be sure to read ALL answers carefully before selecting the one you think is correct, even if you think you know it.
2. Note the answers that you know are wrong so you can clearly see which choices are left.
3. If you must guess, or make an educated guess, keep the following tips in mind:

   (A) **Words to watch out for:** **Absolute** or extreme language -- words like “all”, “always”, “only”, “must”, “completely”, “everyone”, “never”, “totally.” These are more likely contained in the **incorrect** choices, since there are many exceptions to rules.

   (B) **Words to hone in on:** Choose answers which use **qualifying terms**, such as “often”, “usually”, “some”, “most”, “sometimes”, “perhaps”, “may”, and “generally”.


Please take a moment to think about what you are sitting on. Is it comfortable? How is it shaped? Does it swivel? Does it support your back? During the course of an average day, few items are taken for granted more than chairs. The fact that they provide interesting insight into the world in which we live too often goes unnoticed.

For thousands of years, chairs were designed as emblems of authority rather than for ordinary use. Until the sixteenth century, most people had to be content sitting on chests, benches, or stools. Those privileged enough to sit in chairs had them made from ebony, ivory, or gilded wood and draped in expensive materials. Later, when chairs finally became accessible to the general public, its design evolved rapidly to reflect the fashions of the day. Today, there are hundreds of different types of chairs from which to choose. We can sit in rocking chairs, ergonomic chairs, beanbag chairs, and even chairs shaped like eggs, pods, or butterflies. The choice may seem insignificant, but every time we select a chair, we are revealing far more about ourselves than the need to sit down.

1. Which part of the passage contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement?
   A. Part 2
   B. Part 7
   C. Part 10
   D. Part 11

2. Which underlined word in the passage is spelled incorrectly?
   A. unnoticed
   B. accesible
   C. hundreds
   D. revealing
DIAGNOSTIC EXERCISES

Diagnostic Short Answer - Sentence Correction Exercises
(This is the format used on the test.)

1. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   Roanoke Virginia is a lovely City.

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   Johns mother was happy to see him living in his new apartment, he was finally on his own.

   _______________________________________
   _______________________________________

3. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   My Aunt is such a wonderful cook that my families Thanksgiving dinner is always at her house.

   _______________________________________
   _______________________________________

4. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   The florist delivered flowers to Susan’s house in a lovely vase; and she was delighted.

   _______________________________________
   _______________________________________

5. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   Hoping to buy fresh oranges; Sally ran to the store rite after school.

   _______________________________________
   _______________________________________

6. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   Mr. Smidley who collects old cars, called the meeting to order, and each member had to cast their vote on the first motion.

   _______________________________________
   _______________________________________
Pages 4 through 12 are supplemental materials to allow candidates more practice.

Diagnostic Exercises in Capitalization

(NOTE: The actual test questions will not be separated like this to include only one correction area, in this case, capitalization. This exercise format simply allows candidates to see how they do with capitalization.)

Correct the following sentences using the rules of capitalization.

[Rewrite them in the space provided.]

1. This year my easiest classes are mathematics, Spanish, American history, and biology 101.

2. Colorado is located west of the great plains.

3. The civil war was a clash between the north and the south.

4. Mars was the roman god of war.

5. Robert Frost was awarded the pulitzer prize during the kennedy years.
Diagnostic Exercises in Punctuation

(NOTE: The actual test questions will not be separated like this to include only one type of punctuation. This exercise format simply allows candidates to see how they do with each of these four types of punctuation.)

Add commas where needed:

1. Our street which is a dead end gets very little traffic.
2. The girl who won the contest did not attend the assembly.
3. I knitted mittens gloves scarves and sweaters.
5. The new expensive bright red sports car raced up the road.
6. John became nervous when he heard that there would be a pop quiz in his biology class but he calmed down when he saw that the questions on the quiz were easy to answer.

Add semicolons where needed:

1. The tryouts start on Tuesday the decisions will be posted by Friday.
2. The weather report mentioned rain instead, thick fog rolled into the harbor.

Add colons where needed:

1. The florist used these flowers violets, roses and daisies.
2. They journeyed to the last frontier Alaska.
3. I live two lives one at home within my community and one outside in society.

Add apostrophes where needed:

1. All of Sams friends visited him.
2. My sister-in-laws house is lovely.
3. The scientists injected the medicine into the mices veins.
4. The tourists were interested in the two guides stories.
5. The mechanics tools fell from their workboxes onto the bosss floor.
Punctuation Rules

I. Comma:

a. The comma separates two long independent clauses that are joined by a conjunction. For example: “I did not call myself a poet, but I told people I wrote poems.”

(Hint: Compare this to semicolon usage IIa below – without a conjunction.)

CONJUNCTIONS explain the logical relationship between two clauses or phrases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“FANBOYS”</th>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>shows a reason (the second clause gives a reason or explains the first)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And</td>
<td>shows addition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor</td>
<td>shows a negative alternative (It is the negative form of or, and it must follow a clause containing a negative word such as not.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
<td>shows contrast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or</td>
<td>shows an alternative or choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet</td>
<td>shows an unexpected contrast (similar in meaning to although)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>shows a result (the previous phase results in what follows so)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. The comma separates a long modifying phrase or dependent clause from the independent clause that follows it. For example: “In the oddest places and at the strangest times, my grandmother can be found knitting.”

c. The comma separates items in a list or series unless conjunctions appear between each item. For example: “I took her for walks, read her stories, and made up games for her to play.”

d. The comma separates adjectives that equally modify the same noun. For example: “The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight.”

e. The comma sets off nonessential words or phrases which interrupt the flow of the sentence. If the phrase merely adds to the sentence, but is not essential, it is nonrestrictive and needs commas. For example: “My father, who loves to fish, worked for the U.S. Postal Service for thirty years.”

f. The comma sets off introductory elements (a single word or phrase) at the beginning of a sentence. For example: “Consequently, his dog always slept under the table.” “When it rains, the ducks go outside.” (Transitions: however, hopefully, instead, on the other hand.)

II. Semicolon:

a. The semicolon links independent clauses that are not joined by a coordinating conjunction. For example: “I did not call myself a poet; I told people I wrote poems.”

(Hint: Compare this to comma usage 1a above – with a conjunction.)

b. The semicolon links independent clauses that are joined by transitional expressions. For example: “The old man seldom thought about the old white and blue dishes on the table; however, they seemed very important to him at this moment.”
III. Colon:

a. The colon is used to introduce a list. For example: “We shared the same fundamental needs: friends, family, and familiar culture.”

b. The colon may be used to emphasize a word, phrase, clause, or sentence that explains or adds impact to the main clause. For example, “He’s been a prisoner here longer than anyone else: thirty-three years.”

IV. Apostrophe:

a. The possessive form of a singular noun is usually made by adding an apostrophe and an s. For example: “Spock’s ears”

b. The apostrophe indicates possession.

NOTE: When a singular noun ends with an s or a z sound, the possessive may be formed by adding just an apostrophe. However, when the singular noun is a one-syllable word, the possessive is usually formed by adding both an apostrophe and an s. For example, “Kiss’s last concert”

c. The possessive form of plural nouns ending in s is usually made by adding just an apostrophe. For example: “bosses’ office,” “Joneses’ great-grandfather”

d. When possession is shared by more than one noun, use the possessive form for the last noun in the series. For example: “Smith, Carter and Cook’s summer cottage” (All three own the same cottage)

e. The possessive of a compound noun is formed by placing the possessive ending after the last word. For example, “his mother-in-law’s career,” “the secretary of the state’s spouse,” “the attorney general’s office”

NOTE: It will help you punctuate correctly if you remember the word immediately before the apostrophe is the owner.

Girl’s guitar (girl is the owner)    boss’s office (boss is the owner)
Girls’ guitar (girls are the owners)  bosses’ office (bosses are the owners)

REMINDER: An apostrophe can also indicate a contraction. The apostrophe then takes the place of a missing letter or letters. For example, “do not” becomes “don’t.”
Sentence Corrections: Most Common Errors

The most common errors in the grammar sections are listed below.

1. **Sentence fragments** — an incomplete sentence, missing either subject or verb.

   Ex. #1: Although the car was very old and needed a muffler.
   Revised: Although the car was very old and needed a muffler, Charlene decided to buy it.

2. **Run-on sentences** — a punctuation error that occurs when there is no punctuation between the independent clauses.

   Ex. #1: I didn’t know which job I wanted I couldn’t decide.
   Revised: I didn’t know which job I wanted; I couldn’t decide.

   Ex. #2: I enjoyed taking classes in my major, I did not like classes I had to take in other fields.
   Revised: I enjoyed taking classes in my major, but I did not like classes I had to take in other fields.
   [Or replace the comma with a semicolon or period.]

3. **Subject-verb agreement** — subject-verb agreement occurs when the subject and verb endings agree in number and in person. In order to identify errors in subject-verb agreement, one must be able to find the subject and verb of each sentence.

   **When the subject words are joined by either...or, neither...nor, or not only...but, the verb must agree with the closest subject word.**

   Ex. #1: Either Alice or her children are going to bed early.
   Ex. #2: Neither my parents nor my brother has seen the new baby.

4. **Pronoun and noun (antecedent) agreement** — pronouns and their antecedents* (nouns) must agree in number and person

   * An antecedent is a word or phrase that a subsequent word refers to. That subsequent word (pronoun) must agree with the antecedent noun (or other pronoun) it refers to.
   
   For example, in the sentence “Alice likes her new apartment,” the word “Alice” is the antecedent of the possessive pronoun “her.” They are in agreement because they are both singular.

   Ex. #1: Not everyone who drops out of college ruins their life.
   Revised: Not all students who drop out of college ruin their lives.

   Ex. #2: A student sometimes discovers that he or she doesn’t like their chosen field.
   Revised: Students sometimes discover that they don’t like their chosen field.
   A student sometimes discovers that he or she doesn’t like his or her chosen field.

5. **Homophones** — words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings.

   Ex. #1: Please speak up because I cannot here what you’re saying.
   Revised: Please speak up because I cannot hear what you’re saying.

   Ex. #2: My brother and his wife took there kids to the park.
   Revised: My brother and his wife took their kids to the park.
6. **Parallel structure** — balancing the elements in a sentence grammatically. For example, if two elements in a sentence are paired, they should be written in the same form: both should be adjectives, phrases, infinitives, etc.

   **Ex. #1:** Effective writing demands breaking our bad habits and that we reinforce our good ones.
   **Revised:** Effective writing demands that we break our bad habits and reinforce our good ones.

   **Ex. #2:** Job opportunities are increasing in the health fields but a decrease has occurred in many areas of engineering.
   **Revised:** Job opportunities are increasing in the health fields but are decreasing in many fields of engineering.

7. **Dangling modifiers** — a word or group of words that refers to or modifies a word or phrase that has not been clearly stated in the sentence.

   **Ex. #1:** After getting a degree in education, more experience in the classroom is needed to be a good teacher.
   **Revised:** After getting a degree in education, Sylvia needed more experience in the classroom to be a good teacher.

   **Ex. #2:** To work as a lifeguard, practice in CPR is required.
   **Revised:** To work as a lifeguard, you are required to have practice in CPR.

8. **Misplaced modifier** — a word or word group placed so far away from what it refers to or modifies that the reader may be confused. Modifiers should be placed as closely as possible to the words they modify in order to keep the meaning clear.

   **Misplaced modifiers are often the source of comedians’ humor, as in this classic from Groucho Marx, “The other day I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got in my pajamas I’ll never know.”**

   **Ex. #1:** The weather reporter announced that a **tornado had been sighted on the evening news.**
   **Revised:** The weather reporter announced on the evening news that a tornado had been sighted.

   **Ex. #2:** He whistled to his huge **black dog opening the car door** and set the groceries in the trunk.
   **Revised:** Opening the car door, he whistled to his huge black dog and set the groceries in the trunk.

9. There may also be errors in **spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.**
PRACTICE EXERCISES
Practice for grammar sections: Agreement Issues

(NOTE: Although there will be agreement errors on the test, there will not be isolated agreement exercises on the test in the format like these on the next three pages. This exercise format simply allows candidates to practice identifying the subject and the verb and addressing other agreement issues when correcting sentences.)

Finding the Subject and Verb (Predicate) of a Sentence

In order to be successful on the sentence correction exercises, it is important that you are able to identify the subject(s) and verb(s) in a sentence. Most errors in the sentence correction exercises have a direct relationship to the subject of the sentence. In addition, subject/verb agreement error questions are commonly found in the multiple choice written passages section of the test.

Every complete sentence is made up of two parts. (1) The subject is the person, place, thing, or idea about which something is said. (2) The predicate tells something or asks something about the subject. A sentence is a group of words expressing a complete thought by means of a subject and a predicate.

The Simple Predicate or Verb. The simple predicate of a sentence is the verb. The simple predicate, or verb, may consist of only one word. It may also be a phrase consisting of a main verb and its auxiliaries, as in have known or might have known. The words making up the verb may be interrupted by a modifier. The modifier is not part of the verb: had almost forgotten, would not speak.

Identifying the Subject and Verb. Underline the verb in each sentence. Draw a (circle) around each subject. Watch out for modifiers. EXAMPLE: Do these (students) always study hard?

1. Wolves usually live in groups.
2. Planting tulip bulbs in the fall makes for a beautiful spring.
3. After eating a light lunch, we walked along the shore for an hour.
4. Connecticut, which established the first public education system in the United States, pays higher salaries to teachers than many other states.
5. Can the Cubs win the pennant this year?

Subject-Verb Agreement

A subject and its verb must agree in number. Use a singular verb with a singular subject, a compound subject that refers to one person or thing, a compound subject made up of singular nouns or pronouns joined by or or nor, and singular indefinite pronouns. Use a plural verb with a plural subject, most compound subjects connected by and, a compound subject made up of plural nouns or pronouns joined by or or nor, and plural indefinite pronouns.

Practice: Subject-Verb Agreement. Underline the correct form of the verb that agrees in number with the subject of each sentence. (Pay attention to whether the subject is singular or plural before selecting the proper verb form that agrees in number with the subject.)

1. Your suggestions for the school play (is, are) being considered, Dee.
2. The order of the exam questions (were, was) changed.
3. Most of the students in Flora’s class (is, are) going on the trip.
4. Either milk or juice (is, are) Betsy’s choice with her lunch.
5. Rose’s gym teacher and math instructor (is, are) Miss Crosby.

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Other Agreement Problems

A collective noun is the name of a group of people or things: club, herd, and crowd. A collective noun takes a singular verb unless the individuals are to be emphasized.

Example:
The crew are switching places. (Individuals are emphasized.)
The crew is the best one in years. (Team is emphasized.)

Some nouns with a final “s” actually stand for one thing and take a singular verb: news, mumps, measles. A few nouns with a final “s” refer to one thing yet take a plural verb: congratulations, pliers, scissors, pants. Words that end in “ics”—economics, athletics, ethics—are singular when referring to a school subject, a science, or a general practice. Otherwise they are plural and are often preceded by a possessive noun or pronoun.

Example:
Her politics are frightening. (Political beliefs.)
Politics is an interesting topic. (The topic or field of politics.)

Even though it may be plural in form, the name of a country or of an organization is singular: the United States, General Motors.

The title of a book, play, TV show, film, or musical composition is considered singular and takes a singular verb: The Chronicles of Narnia, Star Wars.

Words or phrases that express periods of time, fractions, weights, measurements, and amount of money generally use a singular verb. Words or phrases that express a period of time or an amount thought of as a number of separate units use a plural verb.

Five dollars is really a bargain. (The amount.) Five years of study are necessary. (All five years.)

Making Subjects and Verbs Agree. Underline the verb and draw a (circle) around each subject.

1. A panel of experts (is, are) going to decide the question.
2. Gymnastics (requires, require) flexibility as well as strength.
3. Some days the news about world problems (frighten, frightens) me.
4. The cast (is, are) changing their costumes during intermission.
5. The Netherlands (has, have) many historic sites.
More Agreement Problems

Relative Pronouns

A *relative pronoun* may be singular or plural depending on its antecedent. If the antecedent is plural, the relative pronoun is plural. If the antecedent is singular, the relative pronoun is singular.

Mrs. Ferraro is the woman who *was* nominated. (singular)
These are the players who *deserve* the trophy. (plural)
Dr. Johnson is the only one of the dentists who *has* a hygienist. (singular)
I like the kind of people who always *try* to learn new things. (plural)

**Choosing the Correct Form of the Verb.** In each of the following sentences, underline the correct form of the verb to be used with the relative pronouns.

1. This is one of the pianos that (needs, need) tuning.
2. We found some of the puppies that (was, were) abandoned.
3. Several of the performers that we met (is, are) signing autographs now.

Indefinite Pronouns

There are both *singular* and *plural* indefinite pronouns. Some are always singular and some are always plural. Others may be singular or plural, depending on their use in a sentence. *Some, none, all, any* and *most* are singular when they refer to *a portion or a quantity*. They are plural when they refer to a *number of individual items*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Singular or Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another</td>
<td>either</td>
<td>nobody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anybody</td>
<td>everybody</td>
<td>no one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>one</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anything</td>
<td>everything</td>
<td>somebody</td>
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<td>several</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>some</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*One* of the plants *is* blooming.
*Several* in the package *are* broken.
*Some* of the ice cream *is* melted.
*Some* of the fish *are* swimming.

**Choosing the Correct Form of the Verb.** In each of the following sentences, underline the correct verb form to be used with the pronouns.

1. Several of the players on the team (was, were) given scholarships.
2. Each student (was, were) in chemistry lab yesterday.
3. Neither of the houses (looks, look) very old.
SAMPLE EXERCISES

(The sample exercises on the remaining pages are in the format used on the test.)

Sample Short Answer Sentence Correction Exercises

1. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

Although an investor is unlikely to double their money investing in one of these “blue chip” stocks; at least such stocks shouldn’t lose money.

2. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

Later Presidents built on Roosevelt’s idea and today the weekly presidential address is a vital means of communication for chief executives.

3. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

There they had a decision to make as the road split into two directions, one continued Westward toward Russia and on to the Baltic, and the other turned southward into India.

4. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

No more than a mere speck of land in the vast Pacific, Easter island is the site of one of the world’s great archaeological mysterys.

5. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

As the gangway swung away from the ships’ side Peter could see his friends waving and shouting from the dock.
The books of William Least Heat-Moon document his personal exploration of America. In *Blue Highways*, he crossed the country using only secondary highways and back roads. A journey that enabled him to explore the variety and richness of small-town American life. In another book, *PrairyErth*, Least Heat-Moon focused on a single county in Kansas, recording its human and natural history, quadrant by quadrant. In addition to delving beneath the surface of the gently rolling landscape to reveal a fascinating geologic story of ancient seabeds turned to stone, he examined the lives of the Kaw people, the settlers, and the farmers who have occupied the land. In yet another work, *River Horse*, he followed the nation's waterways on a journey from New York's Hudson River to Oregon's Columbia River.

7 In each of these voyages of discovery, Least Heat-Moon provides considerable insight into the character of ordinary people and the unique environment of particular places. He has a gift for engaging many different kinds of people in conversation and interacting with people from all walks of life. He is equally adept at laying out the geological and biological underpinnings of a region. Using a few chance remarks heard in a roadside restaurant, he is able to capture the essence of a way of life. As much as the people living there, the hills and valleys, plants and animals come alive as well. Readers finish each book feeling that they have not just visited each place, they have established a personal connection with it.

1. Which part of the passage contains a redundant expression of ideas or information?

A. Part 5
B. Part 6
C. Part 7
D. Part 8

2. Which of the following changes would make the sequence of ideas in the second paragraph clearer?

A. Reverse the order of Parts 7 and 8.
B. Place Part 11 after Part 7.
C. Reverse the order of Parts 9 and 10.
D. Place Part 11 after Part 12.

3. Which part of the passage is a sentence fragment?

A. Part 3
B. Part 4
C. Part 8
D. Part 9

4. Which underlined word in the passage is spelled incorrectly?

A. secondary
B. fascinating
C. environment
D. essence
1. Which part of the passage draws attention away from the main idea of the second paragraph?

A. Part 5
B. Part 7
C. Part 9
D. Part 10

2. Which part of the passage should be revised to correct an error in subject-verb agreement?

A. Part 1
B. Part 4
C. Part 7
D. Part 11

3. Which change is needed in the passage?

A. Part 2: Insert a comma after "language."
B. Part 3: Insert a comma after "ASL."
C. Part 7: Delete the comma after "cases."
D. Part 9: Delete the comma after "right."
1. At the time of her death in 1960, few people remembered Zora Neale Hurston. In the last 15 years of her life, the talented writer who had earlier captivated critics as well as readers in books such as Mules and Men (1935) and Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937) could barely make a living at her craft. One person who did not forget her was Alice Walker, a young writer from Georgia.

2. Walker first pursued her own literary ambitions at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, where she completed her undergraduate work. Soon after the publication of her first book of poetry in 1968 Walker began urging authors, critics, and publishers to reconsider Hurston's work.

3. She also found the unmarked grave in which Hurston had been buried and paid to have a marker placed over it.

4. The nature of that influence is not hard to discover. Although separated by four decades, both writers expose similar themes in their novels. They are particularly concerned about the effects of systematic persecution and the empowerment of the oppressed. Their female characters find power in the beauty of nature and in the relationships they build with other people. They then use that strength to assert their right to be treated decently.

1. Which part of the passage draws attention away from the main idea of the first paragraph?

   A. Part 2  
   B. Part 4  
   C. Part 5  
   D. Part 6

2. Which sentence, if added as Part 7, provides the best transition from the first paragraph to the second paragraph?

   A. Although Hurston’s conservative politics set her apart from many of her peers, she had an enormous influence on people who knew her.  
   B. Walker fully appreciated the role Hurston had played in the Harlem Renaissance and the development of African American literature.  
   C. Hurston was not only a gifted writer but an accomplished ethnographer whose work as a folklorist received critical acclaim.  
   D. Walker did these things as a way of paying tribute to someone who had strongly influenced her own development as a writer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3. Which part of the passage contains an error in word usage? | A. Part 3  
B. Part 4  
C. Part 9  
D. Part 11 |
B. Part 5: Insert a comma after “1968.”  
C. Part 6: Insert a comma after “buried.”  
D. Part 11: Insert a comma after “nature.” |
ANSWER KEY

DIAGNOSTIC EXERCISES

Diagnostic Multiple-Choice - Written Passages Exercise on Grammar, page 2

“Chairs”

1. D
2. B

Diagnostic Short Answer Sentence Correction Exercises, page 3

1. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

Roanoke Virginia is a lovely City.

Errors:
1. punctuation (missing comma)
2. incorrect capitalization of city

Sample Correct Response:

Roanoke, Virginia is a lovely city.

2. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

Johns mother was happy to see him living in his new apartment, he was finally on his own.

Errors:
1. missing apostrophe
2. run-on sentence (comma splice)

Sample Correct Response:

John’s mother was happy to see him living in his new apartment; he was finally on his own.

John’s mother was happy to see him living in his new apartment. He was finally on his own.
3. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   My Aunt is such a wonderful cook that my families Thanksgiving dinner is always at her house.

   Errors:
   1. incorrect capitalization of aunt
   2. spelling/punctuation (families instead of family’s)

   Sample Correct Response:

   My aunt is such a wonderful cook that my family’s Thanksgiving dinner is always at her house.

4. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   The florist delivered flowers to Susan’s house in a lovely vase; and she was delighted.

   Errors:
   1. misplaced modifier (“in a lovely vase”)
   2. incorrect use of a semi-colon (instead of a comma)

   Sample Correct Response:

   The florist delivered flowers in a lovely vase to Susan’s house, and she was delighted.

5. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   Hoping to buy fresh oranges; Sally ran to the store rite after school.

   Errors:
   1. incorrect use of a semi-colon (instead of a comma)
   2. spelling (rite instead of right)

   Sample Correct Response:

   Hoping to buy fresh oranges, Sally ran to the store right after school.
6. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

Mr. Smidley who collects old cars, called the meeting to order, and each member had to cast their vote on the first motion.

Errors:

1. missing comma (to set off a non-essential phrase)

2. lack of pronoun/antecedent agreement (their instead of his or her)

Sample Correct Responses:

Mr. Smidley, who collects old cars, called the meeting to order, and each member had to cast his or her vote on the first motion.

Diagnostic Exercises in Capitalization, page 4

1. Spanish, American, Biology 101
2. Great Plains
3. Civil War, North, South
4. Roman
5. Pulitzer Prize, Kennedy
Commas

1. Our street, which is a dead end, gets very little traffic.
2. (Correct)
3. I knitted mittens, gloves, scarves and sweaters.
4. Playing in the first college football game, Rutgers…
5. The new, expensive, bright red…
6. …a pop quiz in his biology class, but he…

Semicolons

1. The tryout start on Tuesday; the decisions…
2. The weather report mentioned rain; instead…

Colons

1. The florist used these flowers:
2. They journeyed to the last frontier: Alaska.
3. I live two lives: one…

Apostrophes

1. All of Sam’s friends…
2. My sister-in-law’s house…
3. The scientists injected the medicine into the mice’s veins.
4. The tourists were interested in the two guides’ stories.
5. The mechanics’ tools fell from their workboxes onto the boss’s floor.
PRACTICE EXERCISES

Finding the Subject and Verb exercises, page 10

1. wolves(s), live (v)
2. planting tulip bulbs (s), makes (v)
3. we (s), walked (v)
4. Connecticut (s), pays (v)
5. Cubs(s), can win(v)

Subject-Verb Agreement exercises, page 10

1. are
2. was
3. are
4. is
5. is

Other Agreement Problems exercises, page 11

1. panel (s), is (v)
2. gymnastics (s), requires (v)
3. news (s), frightens (v)
4. cast (s), are (v)
5. The Netherlands (s), has (v)

Pronouns exercises, page 12

Relative Pronouns
1. needs
2. were
3. are

Indefinite Pronouns:
1. were
2. was
3. looks
SAMPLE EXERCISES

Sample Short Answer Sentence Correction exercises, page 13

1. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   Although an investor is unlikely to double their money investing in one of these “blue chip” stocks; at least such stocks shouldn’t lose money.

   **Errors:**
   1. lack of pronoun/antecedent agreement (*their* instead of *his or her*)
   2. incorrect use of semi-colon (instead of a *comma*)

   **Sample Correct Response:**

   *Although an investor is unlikely to double his or her money investing in one of these “blue chip” stocks, at least such stocks should not lose money.*

2. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

   Later Presidents built on Roosevelt’s idea and today the weekly presidential address is a vital means of communication for chief executives.

   **Errors:**
   1. incorrect capitalization of presidents
   2. missing comma

   **Sample Correct Response:**

   *Later presidents built on Roosevelt's idea, and today the weekly presidential address is a vital means of communication for chief executives.*
3. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

There they had a decision to make as the road split into two directions, one continued Westward toward Russia and on to the Baltic, and the other turned southward into India.

Errors:
1. run-on sentence (comma splice)
2. incorrect capitalization of westward

Sample Correct Response:

There they had a decision to make as the road split into two directions; one continued westward toward Russia and on to the Baltic, and the other turned southward into India.

There they had a decision to make as the road split into two directions. One continued westward toward Russia and on to the Baltic, and the other turned southward into India.

4. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

No more than a mere speck of land in the vast Pacific, Easter island is the site of one of the world’s great archaeological mysteries.

Errors:
1. missing capitalization of Island
2. spelling (mysterys instead of mysteries)

Sample Correct Response:

No more than a mere speck of land in the vast Pacific, Easter Island is the site of one of the world’s great archaeological mysteries.

5. The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.

As the gangway swung away from the ships’ side Peter could see his friends waving and shouting from the dock.

Errors:
1. incorrect use of apostrophe (ships’ instead of ship’s)
2. missing comma after an introductory clause

Sample Correct Response:

As the gangway swung away from the ship’s side, Peter could see his friends waving and shouting from the dock.
“William Least-Heat Moon”
1. D
2. C
3. A
4. C

“American Sign Language”
1. A
2. C
3. A

“Zora Neale Hurston”
1. B
2. D
3. C
4. B